



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

Mountain  
Plains  
Region

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Denver, CO 80204

Reply to  
Attn. of:

SP 94-C-45

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Subject: Homeless Children Free/Reduced Price Documentation

To: STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS - Colorado ED, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri ED,  
(Special Nutrition Programs) Montana OPI, Nebraska ED, North Dakota,  
South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming ED

This guidance addresses how school officials and others may streamline the procedures for the approval and documentation of free lunch and breakfast, and free milk, eligibility for homeless children.

Under the school nutrition programs, if the household does not complete an application for the child, current policy authorizes school officials to complete an application on the child's behalf based on their personal knowledge that the child's household situation qualifies that child for benefits. This authority is intended to be exercised on a case-by-case basis and not categorically to whole groups of children. However, because the number of homeless children has risen dramatically over the past few years, the Agency recognizes that there is an increasing need for some schools and institutions to make these determinations for a number of children. To address this situation and to alleviate concerns at the State and local level about the propriety of making these determinations, the Agency is establishing the following procedures.

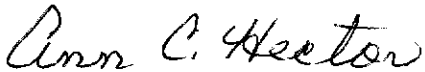
When an application is not submitted by the household or it is not anticipated that an application will be submitted, it is acceptable for the director of the homeless shelter at which the child resides to complete and submit an application for the child, or local level officials (e.g. school principal, or other determining official) may complete an application for a child and approve the child for free meals or free milk based solely on their knowledge that the child's address is a homeless shelter or that the child has no known address and is indeed homeless. Moreover, when it is not practical for those officials to complete individual applications because there are a large number of homeless children or for some other reason, documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility may consist of a list containing the following information:

- \* The child's name
- \* The effective date of eligibility
- \* The date when the child withdrew from school or institution
- \* The child's residence (shelter, etc.)
- \* The signature of the determining official

Because members of the homeless population are frequently transient and their circumstances may change, it is particularly important to update any list used to document eligibility when changes do occur. The objective for officials is to keep the list of eligible children current by removing names of children who have left the school or institution or whose circumstances have changed, and by adding new names to the list.

It is also emphasized that these streamlined determination and documentation procedures may be used by schools or institutions which are operating nonpricing programs, in addition to those operating pricing programs. The Agency recognizes the particular status of homeless children and this guidance reflects a special effort by the Agency to assist them in meeting their nutritional needs. Therefore, FNS Instruction 765-2, which sets out the procedures to determine a child's free meal eligibility when the household has not submitted an application, and which refers to its use only in schools having pricing programs, should not be seen as prohibiting the procedure's use for homeless children participating in nonpricing programs. Officials in nonpricing programs may follow the procedures outlined above to determine eligibility for homeless children.

Please contact our office if you have any questions.



ANN C. HECTOR  
Regional Director  
Special Nutrition Programs